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SD AIR NATIONAL GUARD RECEIVES SPRUANCE SAFETY AWARD

The Airmen of the 114th Fighter Wing, South Dakota Air National Guard, have once again distinguished themselves as one of the top Air National Guard fighter units in the nation. The Fightin' Lobos were selected as the 2011 recipient of the Air National Guard's William W. Spruance Safety Award on Aug. 29, 2011.

The trophy is awarded annually to the Air National Guard Unit which made the most significant contribution to accident prevention. The presentation was made by Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, director, Air National Guard at the annual conference of the National Guard Association of the United States in Milwaukee, Wis.

"The selection for this prestigious award provides strong affirmation by U.S. Air Force leaders of their confidence in the contributions of the South Dakota Air National Guard to our nation's defense," said Col Russ Walz, commander of the 114th Fighter Wing. "Recognitions such as the William W. Spruance Safety Award provide significant validation of our unit's readiness to continually step into new missions."

The 114th Fighter Wing was recently selected as one of the few Air National Guard units in the nation to convert from the Block 30 F-16, which it has flown since 1992, to the newer and more advanced Block 40 F-16. Over the past two decades the unit has deployed eight times to allied bases in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq flying combat missions in Southwest Asia.

"This award serves as yet another testament to the superiority of the 114th Fighter Wing over virtually every other Wing in the nation," stated Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the S.D. National Guard.

The award was named for retired Brigadier General William W. Spruance (1916-2011), former Assistant Adjutant General for Air in the State of Delaware. After surviving a near-fatal crash as a passenger in a T-33 aircraft in 1961, resulting in extensive burns, he began a lifelong and legendary safety mission that took him to dozens of bases in the U.S. and around the world to make over 2,000 presentations on flying safety and crash survival. This is the third time the trophy has been awarded to the South Dakota Air National Guard. It was previously received in 1987 and 1995.

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SD RECRUITERS WIN REGIONAL COMPETITION

South Dakota Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion was recognized as the top recruiters in Region 6 from May through July and were awarded the Lewis and Clark Challenge trophy for the fifth time in the history of the competition.

The SDARNG R&R Battalion placed ahead of Montana, Alaska, North Dakota, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming in the annual challenge – designed to recognize recruiters for their efforts during the typically slow summer months.

The winner of the Lewis and Clark Challenge is determined by the number of soldiers enlisted, the academic, physical and moral fitness of the Soldier, and the number of soldiers who were shipped to basic training. All three areas are accumulated for the final score.

South Dakota rose to the top by having 68 out of 70 soldiers ship to basic training and 97 percent of their enlistments are high school graduates.

“Our recruiter’s perseverance in finding new recruits has paid off. I am proud of every member of our recruiting force,” said Lt. Col. Joseph Jacobson, Recruiting and Retention Battalion commander. “In my opinion our region is the best in the nation and achieving this award means we are the best of the best.”

The entire Region 6 traveled to Whitefish, Mont., Aug. 23 for the three-day Lewis and Clark Challenge event to participate in sales and motivational training workshops, team building activities and network with successful recruiters from other states.

The event ended with a banquet where the SDARNG R&R Battalion received the traveling trophy to be displayed in the Recruiting and Retention office until next year.

“It’s going to be tough to win again next year. Region 6 is really good,” said Jacobson. “Any of the other states could have won this year but we are going to do our best and continue to exceed the standards and keep the trophy next year.”

The best way to predict the future is to create it. “

Peter Drucker”



STAFF CHANGES

Christi Kuiper is the new administrative assistant with the South Dakota Department of the Military. Prior to joining the Department, Christi worked for May, Adam, Gerdes and Thompson Law-firm in Pierre. She and her husband Steve have two sons ages three and one.

Andrea Kramer has been named the business manager at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. Andrea replaces Harley Lux, who has accepted the position of city manager/finance officer for the city of Hot Springs.

Andrea has been with the Home for over four and a half years. Andrea has enjoyed her experience at the Home and believes that every day is "Veterans Day!"

SD GUARD MEMBERS VOLUNTEER FOR DAY OF CARING

Eighteen South Dakota Army National Soldiers joined 950 other community members by volunteering their time to assist neighbors and businesses as part of the United Way of the Black Hills 'Day of Caring' on Sept. 1.

The United Way of the Black Hills kicks off their fundraising campaign each year with a day in which community members and organizations provide their time on various projects around Rapid City.

Nine Soldiers from the 109th Regional Support Group and nine Soldiers from Joint Force Headquarters spent the day painting, washing windows, cleaning gutters, mowing lawns and trimming trees at two separate locations.

"This is a way for us, especially on a nice day with clear skies with the sun shining, to get out of the office and do something different," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 James Fleming, human resource technician. "Then we can go home to our family and brag about a project we did within the community to support a family in need."

In addition to the manual labor provided during its Day of Caring, the United Way's primary mission is to raise money, and then distribute it to many of the area's leading non-profit agencies that provide help to people in need.

"I think it's fantastic that the Soldiers take a day from work to go and help citizens in our community," said SDARNG State Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman. "United Way is a great organization and it's a great opportunity for the Guard to work side by side with the 968 volunteers who are out working in the community today."



VETERANS COMMISSION TO MEET

The South Dakota Veterans Commission will meet Tuesday and Wednesday, October 4-5, 2011. Their meeting will be held in the auditorium at the Sioux Falls VA Healthcare System (2501 W. 22nd Street).

The meeting will be called to order at 8:00 am on the 4th and conclude by noon on the 5th. Commissioners will hear reports from Department leadership, as well as the VA, congressional delegation staffers, ESGR, veterans service organizations, United States DOL, South Dakota National Guard, Sicangu Akicita Owicahé Veterans Cemetery, USTDC Rural Development, Vets Centers, and Dakotas Regional Office.

The agenda for the meeting will be posted on the Department's website prior to the meeting (<http://mva.sd.gov/veterans%20commission%20meetings.html>).

SDNG FIREFIGHTERS JOIN WAR EFFORT

Seven firefighters from the 451st Engineer Detachment (firefighting team), South Dakota Army National Guard, were officially activated Sept. 10 during a deployment ceremony at the Sturgis National Guard armory. The seven-member unit will deploy for a one-year tour to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"The 451st is a firefighting unit. Firefighters are relied upon greatly for their special skills and personal bravery both inside and outside of the military," said Maj. Gen. Timothy Reisch, adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard, during the ceremony. "It seems coincidental that we would be activating this unit just one day prior to the 10th anniversary of the terror attacks on this nation which lead to the start of the war on terror." "It takes a special person to be willing to risk their own life to save others. The 451st is made up of just those kind of people," said Reisch. "A unit like this is extremely valuable both during peace time and during a time of war."

The 451st provides fire-fighting service and support in a theater of operations including fire protection of aviation and major facilities. The firefighters are equipped with fire-fighting gear, a tactical fire-fighting truck and a M916A2 tractor with a 6,000-gallon water tender.

The unit will also conduct several weeks of pre-mobilization training at Fort Hood, Texas, prior to leaving for Afghanistan.



NATIONAL GUARD ENDS FLOOD RESPONSE DUTIES

South Dakota's National Guard has officially ended its flood response duties in the state. Their role began May 27 in Pierre-Fort Pierre and ended September 2 at Dakota Dunes. Guard officials say with the exception of the 1972 Rapid City Flood, there has been no other time in its history that so many Guard members were activated in such numbers and duration for a state emergency.

Guard statistics for the flood:

99 days of duration for flood operations

2,000 personnel supporting flood response through the National Guard

1,279 Guardsmen – largest number of Guardsmen on duty at one time during flood ops

41,721 work days (calendar days multiplied by number on duty for each specific day)

20 sites were producing nearly 500,000 sandbags per day

200.8 aviation hours flown by aircrews in support of flood operations

6,500 one ton sandbags emplaced by National Guard helicopters

Seven National Guard states who contributed to operations (Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Utah, Oklahoma, North Dakota and Wyoming).

JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS CHANGES COMMAND

Capt. Anthony Deiss, White River native now living in Rapid City, is the new commander of South Dakota Army National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters, Rapid City. Deiss received command of the unit Sept. 10, 2011 from Maj. Brendan Murphy of Rapid City, who commanded the unit since May 2, 2009.

Joint Force Headquarters is one of four major commands in the South Dakota Army National Guard, and is a critical element for all 64 units across the state; providing command and control of essential services in administration, intelligence, training, logistics, maintenance, communications, Soldier and family services and other support functions.

With more than 200 members assigned, the main focus for JFHQ is to support the nearly 3,400 members of the SDARNG, and to provide trained and equipped, ready forces capable of mobilizing and deploying in support of state and federal missions.

In civilian life, Deiss is employed by the South Dakota Army National Guard as the Public Affairs Deputy. He has been a member of the Army National Guard for 15 years.

Murphy, the departing commander, will become Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs Officer.



UPCOMING EVENTS

September 16—Stand Down - Watertown
September 16—Retiree Appreciation Day/Luncheon—EAFB
September 16—National POW/MIA Recognition Day
September 20—Stand Down—Aberdeen
September 21—842nd Engineering Company Activation Ceremony
September 21—Stand Down—McLaughlin
September 22—Stand Down—Eagle Butte
September 23—Stand Down—Sioux Falls
September 25—Gold Star Mothers Day
September 28—Capitol for a Day—Canton
October 13—Stand Down—Rapid City
October 14—Women's Veterans Conference—Holiday Inn City Centre—Sioux Falls
October 14-16—VABHHCS Women's Retreat
November 11—Grand Opening of Women of War Center
November 11—Veterans Day
December 10—National Wreaths Across America Remembrance

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